INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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Control: 1758
Rec'd: August 3, 1957
12:51 a.m.

FROM: Guatemala City

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 41, August 2, 7 p.m.

Tel drafted 8/5

file

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 6/4/75
PER Eumbres OFFICE ARA
FADRC EOI CASE NO. 5-B-201

N I A C T

Embassy telegrams 31 and 38.

Foreign Minister told me at noon today President Gonzalez asked him inform me first crisis following death of Castillo Armas has successfully passed. Group of jurists studying constitutional problem of succession resolved Oliva could not legally succeed. Oliva tentative acceptance of offer had been conditioned on constitutionality.

In subsequent meetings of President Gonzalez, government officials, army officers and political leaders, army agreed candidate should be civilian not army officer. However, candidate must be acceptable to army, church, State Department and Guatemalan people. Foreign Minister said names of candidates were now being considered but he ventured no guess as to who might be agreed upon. Conceivably considerable time could elapse before reaching agreement which would insure election of candidate. Other candidates nominated by recognized political parties pusuant to constitution would not be excluded from election.

Foreign Minister recognized difficulties ahead in particular to have army and political forces continue adhere constitutional provisions on succession. He stressed importance of continued US financial aid and moral support. I made no comment other than point out promptness with which Department accepted constitutional succession by President Gonzalez.

It is probable US economic aid which Cruz Salazar underscored in his conversations here has been important factor in decision adhere constitution. Any statement or commitment at this moment on our present or future aid programs should be deferred. If deemed necessary I plan point out there was carryover July 1 of about $15,000,000 in defense support funds and agreed programs have not been suspended or curtailed.

SPARKS

Declassified/Released (s) 84 Aug 7

VH:PH-16

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714.00/8-557

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA — DESP. NO. 96

TO : DECLASSIFICATION DATE 6/4/75 THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. — DATE August 5, 1957

REF : PER [redacted] OFFICE ARA — FADRC FOI CASE NO. 5-R-201 — F75-0309-1188 — AUG 6 1957

	ACTION	DEPT.	
2 Pen Copy Rec Only	ARA-4	RM/R-2 OCR 4 O/P-1 4 O-1 L-2 P-1	
	REC'D 8-9	OTHER CIA-12 DSIA 20 ARMY-4 NA-4 3	

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SUBJECT: Press Conference of Minister of Defense

In his press conference on Wednesday, July 31, Col. Juan Francisco Oliva, Minister of Defense, reiterated that the Army is committed to defending the Constitution. He stated that anyone who attempted to depart from constitutionality would find the Army standing in his way. He denied emphatically that anyone, civilian or military, had suggested that a military junta take over the government after President Castillo's assassination.

With regard to the duration of the state of siege, he said it would be prolonged beyond thirty days only if the situation demanded it. As evidence of good will on the part of the authorities, and of progress toward normalcy, he pointed out that the curfew hour had been set back progressively from 9:00 p.m. to midnight. He noted that this also was subject to change, in keeping with the situation.

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Asked how many persons had been arrested in connection with President Castillo's assassination, he replied he did not have the exact figure, but said he had that day requested the files of all those being held, in order that those not implicated in the crime might be released. The government's information chief, Roberto Castañeda, indicated that the number of persons being held was more than 50 and less than 100.

Col. Oliva stated that no evidence had been discovered to indicate that President Castillo's assassination had resulted from an international plot, although "communists are always plotting against the government..... and communism is international".

Guatemala's two leading independent newspapers have praised Oliva for his statements supporting the Constitution.

Prensa Libre (August 2) says: "It is about time, after so many years of coups d' état, rebellions and flagrant constitutional violations, that we Guatemalans be able to regulate our public life and resolve political problems in accordance with our basic law. Grave as the situation created by the assassination of Col. Castillo Armas may be, it is the best opportunity to demonstrate, as the Minister of Defense has said, that the Army is done with violent means."

BJRuyle:mr — REPORTER

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of securing authority and, on the contrary, has firmly decided to employ all its resources to bring to an abrupt halt any attempt, no matter by whom, to vault the bounds of legality in order to satisfy personal ambitions"

El Imparcial (July 31) speaks of an earlier statement by Col. Oliva as being of "importancia trascendental". The Minister had said: "Anyone might have expected ....the military to take command...Thus, when in the present emergency the Army respected the Constitution and caused it to be respected, complying faithfully with its provisions, it wrote a brilliant page which constitutes, in itself, (the Army's) finest recommendation."

FOR THE AMBASSADOR:

BJ Ruyle

Ben J. Ruyle
Second Secretary